

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 00710 301758Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 COME-00  
EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-13 HA-05 OMB-01  
TRSE-00 AID-05 PM-05 H-01 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 CU-04 ACDA-12 PC-01 MCT-01 CCO-00  
FBOE-00 OC-06 OPR-02 USSS-00 CA-01 A-01 SCS-06  
SY-05 /134 W

-----090582 301809Z /46

O 301651Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9768  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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PARIS AND BRUSSELS FOR LABATT

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM PGOV TS ELAB  
SUBJ: SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADER MESTIRI HOLD PRESS  
CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADER AHMED MISTIRI  
HELD CONFERENCE WITH FOREIGN PRESS AT HIS HOME SUNDAY  
AFTERNOON. MESTIRI CLAIMED THAT NUMBER OF PERSONS KILLED  
ANNOUNCED GOVERNMENT FIGURES. HE STRONGLY CRITICIZED  
GOVERNMENT HANDLING OF DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH RESULTED IN  
EXCESSIVE LOSS OF LIFE, CALLED FOR RELEASE OF UGTT  
LEADERS NOW UNDER ARREST, AND DEMANDED FORMATION OF  
NATIONAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TO INVESTIGATE CAUSES FOR  
TROUBLES AND TO DETERMINE PERSONS RESPONSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 TUNIS 00710 301758Z

MESTIRI CALLED IMPROMPTU CONFERENCE WITH REPRESENTATIVES  
OF FOREIGN PRESS AT HIS HOME LATE SUNDAY AFTERNOON.  
MESTIRI'S STATEMENT, WHICH WAS STRONGLY CRITICAL OF  
GOVERNMENT, IS SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

3. NUMBER OF DEAD IS MUCH HIGHER THAN AUTHORITIES HAVE

ANNOUNCED, AND IS MOUNTING AMONG WOUNDED. SITUATION IS CRITICAL AND TUNISIA HAS NOT FACED SUCH DANGER SINCE INDEPENDENCE. SOCIAL DEMOCRAT MOVEMENT HAD FORESEEN THIS BUT AUTHORITES IGNORETLP SONGS.

4. GOVERNMENT EVIDENTLY DID NOT LEARN ANY LESSONS FROM VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED AT KSAR HELAL, SOUSSE, SFAX, GAFSA, BEJA AND MATEUR. IT REPLIED WITH PROPAGANDA CAMPAINGS SHICH SERVED ONLY TO ADD TO TENSIONS AND EXCITE PASSIONS.

5. SOCIAL DEMOCRATS LAST WEEK MADE ONE LAST EFFORT TO CHECK DTERIORATION OF SITUATION. ON TUESDAY, JAN 24, DELEGATION COMPOSED OF MESTIRI, HASSIB BEN AMMAR AND BEJI CAID ESSEBSI SOUGHT UNSUCCESSFULLY TO SEE THE PRESIDENT. GROUP WAS RECEIVED, HOWEVER BY PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA AND AFTERWARDS IT CALLED ON UGTT SECRETARY GENERAL. GROUP EXPLAINED ITS CONCERN TO BOTH SIDES, EACH OF WHICH BLAMED THE OTHER FOR THE CRISES. UGTT ACCEPTED PROPOSAL THAT ESSENTIAL SERVICES (ELECTRICITY, GAS AND HOSPITALS) SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AND THAT NO PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION WOULD TAKE PLACE ON JAN 24. EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE INDICATE POLITICAL FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT AS IT WAS UNABLE EITHER TO FORESEE OR TO AVOID THE SITUATION IN WHICH COUNTRY FINDS ITSELF TODAY. MOST OF ACTS OF VIOLENCE WERE COMMITTED BY YOUTHS 15 TO 20 YEARS OLD. THEIR BEHAVIOR REPRESENTS REJECTION OF SOCIETY IN

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 00710 301758Z

WHICH THEY SEE NO ROLE FOR THEMSELVES. A VERITABLE POPULAR REVOLT HAS UNFOLDED.

6. REGIME DID DOTHING TO AVOID CONFRONTATION AND PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD ACTUALLY AGREED ON "TRAIL OF STRENGTH" WITH UGTT WEEKS AGO. AUTHRITIES ARE GUILTY OF HAVING RESORTED TO ARMS TOO QUIDKLY AND TOO MASSIVELY. BLOODBATH WAS RESULT. IT IS NOW FEARED EVENTS WILL BE USED AS PRETEXT BY HARDLINERS TO IMPOSE AUTHORITARIAN REGIME. SITUATION IS GRAVE AND IT IS SURPRISING THAT NEITHER PRESIDENT NOR PRIME MINISTER HAS SEEN FIT TO ADDRESS PEOPLE.

7. MESTIRI CONCLUDED BY CALLING FOR:  
--LAY DOWN ARMS AND RETURN OF TROOPS TO BARRACKS  
--ENDING OF STATE OF EMERGENCY  
--CESSATION OF HATE CAMPAIGN ON TV AND RADIO  
--RELEASE OF ARRESTED UGTT OFFICILS  
--ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TO ASSESS CAUSES AND DETERMINE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH PARTY.

8. COMMENT: WHETHER OR NOT NUMBER OF DEAD ANNOUNCED

BYT GOT IS ACCURATE, FIGURE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY MOUNT.  
GOVERNMENT HAS ADMITTED 325 WOUNDED, AND SOME OF THESE  
HAVE CERTAINLY ALREADY DIED AND OTHERS WILL. NON-TUNISIAN  
DOCTOR CLOSE TO EMBASSY HAS ESTIMATED DEATH TOLL NOW  
AT 70.  
MULCAHY

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, PRESS CONFERENCES, POLITICAL LEADERS, CIVIL DISORDERS, GENERAL STRIKES, PRISONERS RELEASE, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 30 jan 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978TUNIS00710  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780044-0579  
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**Litigation History:**  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 3  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Subject:** SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADER MESTIRI HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE  
**TAGS:** SHUM, PGOV, ELAB, TS, (MISTIRI, AHMED), (ACHOUR, HABIB)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
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20 Mar 2014  
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